

**Appropriations Committee
February 19, 2014
Testimony of
James E. Dzurenda, Commissioner
Department of Correction**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is James Dzurenda, Commissioner of the Department of Correction. Chair Erika Tindall of the Board of Pardons and Paroles joins me today.

The Governor's midterm budget will allow us to continue to make real progress toward a leaner and more cost efficient corrections system in Connecticut and towards a real and permanent reduction in the rate of recidivism in our state. I am confident that with the support of the Governor, the Legislature, the Judicial Branch, sister agencies, community partners and the hard-working men and women of the Department of Correction we will be successful in these efforts.

We have worked to contain costs, leverage federal dollars and continue the work started last fiscal year on reentry with increased availability of evidence based programs that have been shown to reduce recidivism among participants. We have worked to expand and enhance our relationships and partnerships with our sister agencies, state, local and federal law enforcement partners, non-profit service providers, host communities and advocacy groups. We have worked to modernize our systems and physical plant and we have worked to eliminate non-value added activity and to increase efficiencies and productivity throughout the agency.

In the coming fiscal year we plan to expand upon the department's research and analysis capability, working in conjunction with the Office of Policy and Management, the Parole Board and the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division, so that efforts to reduce recidivism can be evaluated and reported. We will continue efforts such as Project Longevity, in which DOC staff work closely with state, local and federal law enforcement personnel, municipal officials, social service providers and community leaders to directly communicate the consequences of engaging in violence to at risk gang/group members in the city of New Haven. As a result of our involvement, members of DOC were honored for their commitment to this initiative as recipients of the Violent Crimes and Narcotics Unit Award. DOC currently participates in numerous such efforts throughout the state. It is our hope that such initiatives will help reduce both the state's crime rate and rate of recidivism which will equate to less victims in our communities.

As you are aware the Affordable Care Act provides new opportunities for Medicaid reimbursement for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. As the Governor mentioned in his budget proposal, the state, "as an early adopter of the Medicaid expansion..., has already taken advantage of some of these opportunities. Acute care services received by inmates are being reimbursed under Medicaid and a concerted effort has been ongoing to assist individuals leaving corrections or the courts in obtaining benefits under the Medicaid program for low-income adults so they have immediate access to medications and community-based treatment that will assist them in making a better transition to the community and thereby reduce recidivism."

In regard to the modernization of our IT systems and physical plant, DOC has embarked on several large initiatives which will have a significant impact on the agency.

First, in cooperation with OPM, DEEP and DAS, DOC is embarking on a performance based contracting initiative, through DEEP's Energy Savings Performance Contracting program. Not only will this effort yield long-term budgetary savings as a result of lower utility costs, we are confident that this capital investment in our physical plant and energy systems will yield lower maintenance and operating costs which will free up resources for other much needed physical plant investments and improvements. This program will help transform our aging facilities into more energy efficient and environmentally friendly ones

In addition, utilizing the IT Capital Investment Fund, DOC has been able to make progress on two significant IT projects which represent enormous technological advancement for the agency. DOC has begun the process of developing a Health Portal system which will establish an electronic health records within our healthcare delivery system and ultimately permit healthcare data to be extended into community supervision and allow for data to flow into the state's health information exchange system in a secure format. This system will provide opportunities to employ data to improve healthcare outcomes and maintain or lower healthcare costs. DOC is also currently in the process of procuring a new Offender Management Information System which will provide a complete 360 degree view of the offender from admission to release. This new system will replace our current outdated and labor intensive mainframe based system that has been in-place since the early 1970's. As with the Health Portal system, this much needed new system will automate numerous manual processes and create efficiencies throughout the agency. It will also provide for a lower cost IT environment, increased interoperability and data sharing with our sister agencies and law enforcement partners as well as significantly contribute to improved offender outcomes through better offender management.

In addition to such large scale efforts, we continue to examine all aspects of our business model for opportunities to improve offender outcomes, increase operational efficiencies, reduce costs and improve and enhance safety and security for the citizens of Connecticut. Modest initiatives such as: standardizing the ordering and utilization of general cleaning, hygiene and maintenance supplies will generate a 0.5% savings from our annualized warehouse orders; the modification of the existing schedule for specialized training (from monthly to quarterly) will result in savings in both overtime and operating costs; and the replacement of disposable styrofoam trays, currently utilized at Northern Correction Institution for the higher security offenders, with a re-usable "flex" tray is estimated to save approximately \$36,000 annually. Small initiatives such as these add up to significant savings across the agency. We are confident that we will be able to accelerate such efforts through the use of Lean and I am pleased to report that the DOC is in the process of incorporating Lean concepts and principles into the agency's DNA and will be undertaking its first formal Kaizen events next week.

Please know that we remain committed to controlling costs and pursuing efficiencies, where possible, while continuing our primary mission of maintaining a safe, professional, and efficient correctional system. The department is dedicated to honoring the rights of crime victims, and to making sure that high-risk offenders receive proper oversight and interventions as we continue our efforts to reduce recidivism and lower crime. We will continue to strive to improve public safety for the citizens of Connecticut, to ensure a safe environment for staff, and to provide offenders with opportunities to safely reintegrate into their communities as productive members of society.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today, and I would be happy to answer your questions.